Saskatchewan School Bus Safety Review Committee

Interim Report

November 15, 1983

Hon. James W. Garner
Chairman

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SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL BUS SAFETY REVIEW COMMITTEE

INTERIM REPORT

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Chairman - Hon. James W. Garner
Minister of Highways and Transportation

Vice-Chairman - Nick Volk
President, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association

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1. Introduction

As a result of the tragic Strasbourg school bus accident last spring in which five year old Craig Meyers and 53 year old Walter Wornarski were killed, it was decided that school bus safety should again be extensively reviewed. The entire question of school bus safety was brought to a forefront as a result of this accident.

School bus safety is a priority issue with the government because of our most precious resource - our children.

The establishment of a School Bus Safety Review (SBSR) Committee was announced June 20, 1983. The SBSR Committee was formed to study all aspects of school bus safety including vehicle design, seat belts, bus lighting and operations as well as student, driver and public education. This Committee represents a joint effort between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association working towards the common goal of better and safer school bus transportation in the province.

This interim report addresses issues and alternatives raised by bus drivers, parents, school representatives, special interest groups and the police. The information included is an outline of options available to the Committee. It must be emphasized that, except where noted, no specific alternatives are being proposed by the Committee at this time. Rather, the options have been outlined in order to provide a focus for further discussions. Further public meetings may be required to solicit input on the various alternatives presented in this report.

However, one recommendation has been made and implemented. A new school bus signing program was announced on October 18. This is a two-part program. Input received at SBSR Committee meetings held throughout the province suggested that additional signs would make motorists more aware of the location of school bus stops and of the need to stop for buses displaying flashing red lights.

Part 1 was the development of a new sign, "Stop (for School Bus) When Lights Flashing". These signs are being located on higher volume roadways to ensure maximum exposure when reminding motorists about the law and will be totally funded by the Department of Highways and Transportation. These new signs take a graphic approach to attracting motorist attention.

Part 2 is the provision for additional "School Bus Ahead" warning signs to be erected at various problem locations. The Departments of Highways and Transportation, and Rural Development, in co-operation with the SSTA will be implementing a bus signing program for highways and municipal roads.

Each school board will be contacted to identify the locations of up to eight school bus stops in their division, where there are existing or potential hazards.

The Department of Highways and Transportation will incur all of the costs for increased signing along provincial highways. Municipal and grid road signing for school bus stops will be cost-shared by the local municipality and the Department of Rural Development.

As mentioned earlier, this interim report discusses issues and alternatives brought forth to the Committee. It does not provide final recommendations. Many of the issues must be researched in more depth due to their complexity. A final report is expected to be released by the Committee early in 1984.

The SBSR Committee will be ongoing and will continue to review and make recommendations in the area of school bus safety.

2. School Bus Safety Review Committee Members:

Chairman
- Hon. James Garner
  Minister of Highways and Transportation

Vice-Chairman
- Nick Volk, President
  Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA)

Secretary
- Kathy Hancock, Public Communications
  Highways and Transportation

Members
- Jake Volk, Executive Director
  Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
- Ewald Wagner, Chairman
  Transportation Council, SSTA
- Jim Phillips
  Executive Member, SSTA
- Carl Shiels, Executive Director
  Traffic Safety Services, Highway Traffic Board
  Highways and Transportation
- Al Popoff, Director
  Traffic Safety Engineering Branch
  Highways and Transportation
- Gordon McGregor, Educational Consultant
  Education

3. Summary of Activities

In an effort to meet with as many people as possible who have concerns in the area of school bus safety, the Committee held seven public meetings throughout the province. The SBSR Committee approached a number of persons

and organizations whose expertise was essential. Resource organizations included the Saskatchewan Safety Council, Transport Canada, Canadian Transport Commission, RCMP, Chief Coroner's Office, school bus manufacturers and many other interested individuals and groups.

A number of issues and alternatives were raised with the Committee. At each meeting at least one formal presentation was given by an invited speaker, followed by an open discussion.

In order to inform the public of the meetings:

- a number of invitations were sent out,
- information was sent to the media,
- in some instances, public notices were published in local newspapers.

The average number of persons in attendance at each meeting was approximately 80. Approximately half of the audience in each instance was school bus drivers.

The Committee held meetings as follows:

Date/Location	Scheduled Briefs
August 2, 1983 Saskatoon	Bob Rowley Executive Director Saskatchewan Safety Council
August 24, 1983 Swift Current	Robin Myers Motor Vehicle Regulations Transport Canada
	S/Sgt. Bill Todd RCMP
August 25, 1983 Regina	Sandra Johnson Buffalo Plains School Division
	Frank Beemer Sales Manager Bluebird Bus Manufacturing Co.
September 20, 1983 Yorkton	George Arnold Bus Supervisor Yorkdale School Division
	Dr. Stewart McMillan Chief Coroner
October 13, 1983 Prince Albert	Ralph Gray Director Canadian Transport Commission

October 14, 1983 North Battleford	Joan Kirkham Red Cross
October 18, 1983 Estevan	Ruth Robinson Chairperson Child Safety Committee

4. Briefs

In addition to those scheduled briefs indicated above, a number of unscheduled briefs were also presented to the Committee and approximately 75 letters have been received. A complete list of persons and organizations presenting briefs is presented in Appendix A. Copies of these briefs are available by contacting the office of the Hon. James Garner, Minister of Highways and Transportation, Room 332, Legislative Building, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4S 0B3.

5.1 Seat Belts

Throughout all of the discussions related to school bus safety, the topic of seat belt installation and use was frequently discussed. Comments ranged from strong support to strong opposition. On balance, the majority of those attending the hearings opposed the installation of seat belts on school buses. While some argued that seat belts could be a safety hazard, most were primarily concerned about the practical problems associated with seat belt installation, pupil discipline in their use and legal responsibility or liability if not used.

In the case of school buses, it was pointed out that installation of seat belts in older buses with low-backed, poorly padded seats would have little if any benefit. Indeed, seat belt use in older buses involved in head-on collisions could increase the incidence of throat and facial injuries as the student's upper body pivoted forward onto the top of the seat ahead. The anchorage of seats in older buses would also be expected to limit seat belt effectiveness. It was further suggested that the presence of seat belts in such situations could lead to a false sense of security.

The cost of seat belts ($10 per belt if installed at the factory, or $20 per belt if retro-fitted into newer buses with high backed padded seats) was seldom raised as an argument against their installation.

The question of number of belts per seat was frequently raised. Given that school bus seats can accommodate three primary grade students or two upper grade students, some belts, if installed three per seat, would go unused.

On the matter of discipline and seat belt use concern was expressed that, not only would it be difficult to get all children to use belts, but, some children would be likely to misuse them as weapons to injure other children on the bus.

Since seat belts are being used in school buses in some jurisdictions in Canada and the U.S., the Committee will endeavour to obtain first hand information on their experience and provide details in the final report.

With regard to legal responsibility and liability, two issues arose. First, the Vehicles Act requires all persons who occupy a seating position fitted with a seat belt to use the belt. In the case of persons 16 years or older, responsibility rests with the individual. In the case of persons under the age of 16, responsibility rests with the driver. This would mean that the school bus drivers could be charged with a violation of the Vehicles Act and fined if any of the children under 16 years were not buckled up.

The second legal issue was that of civil liability.

Drivers, school board members and contractors all expressed concern about the liability question with respect to seat belt use. For example, it was felt that children may be unable to release the belts in the event of a crash.

On the positive side, safety organizations tended to support seat belt use arguing that children of today are trained from birth to use child seats or seat belts and that the absence of seat belts in school buses tends to detract from this established safety habit.

Alternatives

On the matter of seat belt installation and use a broad range of alternatives exist:

1) No seat belts in school buses.

2) Require installation of seat belts only in van conversion buses.

3) Retro-fit seat belts for the front seats of older buses which have no protective front barriers.

4) Retro-fit seat belts into all buses. This would be the most expensive alternative since it would also require major modification of seats and reinforcement of the floor on older buses manufactured prior to 1982.

5.2 Education

Pupil transportation must be a team effort!

The competence of school bus drivers and the uniformity of procedures and practices followed by all other persons - including other vehicle operators, pupils, their parents and the school administration, have a definite effect on the safe, adequate and efficient operation of the pupil transportation system.

Saskatchewan's record for co-operation in education and road safety is excellent - we are looked upon as being in the vanguard of pupil transportation. However, there exists room for improvement and in the course of the past four months the Committee has received briefs and heard testimony that attest to this statement. The Committee has also heard that in order to effect change, all key "players" must be involved in the education process.

More specifically, the Committee has heard concern registered as well as plaudits extended to three major components of the pupil transportation system and at the same time, in some instances, received suggestions for improvement:

- other road users: training, testing and responsibilities
- pupils and parents: responsibilities
- school bus drivers: education and training.

School Bus Drivers

Driving a vehicle the size of a school bus is a difficult task, involving knowledge of laws and regulations, visual, mechanical and human relation skills, judgments, decisions and accurate responses.

Are bus drivers sufficiently qualified? Should their qualifications be upgraded in order to meet the challenges of the profession?

The Committee was apprized of many training and upgrading programs already in place in several centres in the province. Some of these programs included:

- The School Bus Driver Improvement Course offered by the Saskatchewan Safety Council. This modularized, self-paced program that covers such topics as evacuation drills and discipline as well as safe driving practices appears to be well received although used to a limited extent throughout the province. Should it therefore, be a compulsory program for all bus drivers? What about tying it to the three-year drivers test required for bus drivers? Other driving courses that have been embraced to varying degrees across the province include the Professional Driver Improvement Course and the Defensive Drivers Course.

Evidence was also tendered to the Committee by some school board representatives of success with specific skill-enhancement short courses such as the St. John's Ambulance First Aid Course and Fire Control Course. In light of the degree of exposure to traffic as well as the high potential for accident occurance might it be wise for all school bus drivers to be required to receive such training as a prerequisite for licensing or employment?

A concern was expressed that too stringent requirements might well result in a shortage of bus drivers - an issue of grave concern to school officials.

Support was received for continuation and expansion of local Bus Driver Institutes - a practice that is presently wide spread throughout the province. Another activity that received scattered support was for school bus driver rodeos. Should they be expanded? What should be the role of school officials and government in the role of this continuing professional development of school bus drivers? Who should be expected to bear the costs for these training programs?

Satisfaction was expressed by drivers and administrators with the substance of present driver tests although suggestions have been tendered regarding development of a school bus driver handbook. Such a handbook will be developed by the Department of Highways and Transportation in the near future. The handbook will be developed in consultation with members of the SSTA, Transportation Council, school bus drivers and pupil transportation supervisors.

Pupils and Parents

The Committee heard concern expressed, particularly by some bus drivers about behavioural problems of some students that, by their very nature, impact adversely on the ability of the bus driver to cope effectively with the demands of the driving task. Lack of discipline as well as inappropriate behaviour, both inside and outside the bus, are a source of genuine concern for bus drivers generally, since such problems hold the potential for serious injury or death. The universal hope and desire was expressed by drivers for greater positive participation by parents in dealing with issues involving pupils.

Suggestions for improvement included:

- greater uniformity in dealing with such issues through the development and implementation, in whole or in part, by individual boards of education, of an omnibus, suggested pupil transportation policy. Appropriate excerpts applicable to parents and pupils would be discussed in the classroom or sent home in a letter so that everyone involved would be familiar with, and could be held accountable for their actions. The Committee noted such is the practice in several school divisions presently and perhaps they could assist in the production of a suitable document based on their experiences.

Many bus runs are conducted in relatively isolated areas of the province with the danger of vehicle breakdown or road/environment emergencies - such as storms - is ever present, particularly during the winter months. Many presenters expressed concern about inappropriate dress of pupils. Light summer weight jackets and running shoes worn during -30 C weather is courting disaster should the bus break down or become stuck.

How to deal effectively and cope with the situation should an emergency arise was the subject of much discussion at several of the hearings. It was suggested that student evacuation drills, use of bus monitors and even something as simple as a card - with the name, address and phone number of key contact persons in the community (eg. RCMP, a local doctor, ambulance, principal and director of education) should be a part of the educational process provided to every pupil utilizing the pupil transportation program.

Emphasis was placed, in several briefs, on the need for acquisition and use of current educational materials in the schools in order to facilitate:

- greater student awareness of their responsibilities as bus riders. In this regard, the Committee received a brief about programs such as the Red Cross Bus Riders Safety Course, an excellent teacher resource package for K-3 teachers.

- greater parental involvement in order to deal with discipline issues, clothing problems as well as route and stop site selection.

Other Road Users

Concern was expressed to the Committee at every hearing, particuarly by bus drivers, about the alarming frequency of drivers passing stopped school buses displaying the alternately flashing red lights. Suggestions have been tendered by bus drivers, driver educators and enforcement officials as to how to "educate" the general motoring public. These included:

- the development and implementation of a sign program to acquaint drivers of what they should do when confronted by a school bus displaying flashing lights. Some elements of this suggestion are presently in place or have been recently addressed - such as the school bus signing program mentioned previously in this report.

Alternatives

1) Use of mass media advertising - particularly at critical times of the year in order to remind drivers of their responsibilities.

2) Development and distribution of special handbooks and pamphlets to school bus drivers dealing specifically with school bus issues.

3) A review of present driver licensing procedures with the view to placing additional emphasis on examination questions related to school buses (eg. every prospective driver who takes a written test from the Highway Traffic Board would be asked a question related to the need to stop for school buses. Failure to correctly answer the question would result in a failure).

4) A review of current driver education programs to encourage early emphasis on driver responsibilities when confronted by a school bus.

5) Several testimonials by bus drivers expressed dissatisfaction with the penalties handed out by the courts, to drivers who passed school buses with lights flashing. Minimum fines of $5 to $50, it was stated time and again, make a mockery of the law and often result in the bus driver gaining the impression that it is he or she on trial, not the offending driver. Support for an increase in the minimum level of fines for offences such as passing a stopped school bus was extended by drivers at every meeting of the Committee. It was suggested that a $250 minimum fine would be an appropriate penalty for drivers who pass school buses displaying flashing lights. The Committee is seriously considering this recommendation.

6) Recommendations were received that would see the establishment of a program similar to the "Traffic Watch" project whereby offending drivers would be reported to police by school bus drivers.

7) In addition to use of mass media - suggestions were received to consider use of bumper stickers in order to reinforce specific messages related to school bus safety.

5.3 Vehicle Design and Maintenance

School buses have undergone major upgrading in recent years as a result of increased standards established by CSA, The Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Act and provincial regulations. In spite of these improvements, some problems and concerns continue to persist.

In the case of conventional school buses, the main concern centres around problems of visibility for the driver. Wide front roof pillars, inadequate window provisions on the right front door and the type and location of mirrors were the subject of recurring complaints.

The accumulation of dust, mud and snow on the rear of the bus also represents a persistent and long-standing problem. In some cases, complaints were registered about the extent to which the new high-back seats obscur the view of the driver.

Ultimately, the solution to some of these problems will have to rest with the manufacturer and the federal government. The province is very limited in the extent to which it can influence the basic vehicle design standards of the national and international bus manufacturing industries.

The type and location of mirrors is one exception to this and the staff of the Highway Traffic Board continue to work with school bus managers in the province in an attempt to arrive at an optimum arrangement for mirrors. As and when this matter is resolved, regulations may be amended to address the mirror problem.

One aspect of vehicle design which has received a great deal of attention by the Committee in its public and private discussions is the safety of van conversions. These vehicles are used extensively in the province, particularly in areas of low population density and in urban locations for special needs students.

Provincial standards, developed since 1978, go a long way to improving the safety of these vehicles. Nonetheless, they are recognized as being structurally less crashworthy than vehicles with conventional bus bodies.

The question of cost is also a consideration in both the original purchase and in the operation of van conversion buses. No doubt this is one of the major criteria for the selection of these buses by some school boards and school bus contractors.

Vehicle handling characteristics was the major issue related to vans raised by bus drivers. In general the drivers of vans were pleased with the driveability of these vehicles, probably because it is very similar to that of private passenger vehicles.

A major question when considering the appropriateness of van conversions is what alternatives would be adopted if van use were to be discontinued. A wide scale move to private passenger vehicle use would represent a serious deterioration in the safety of children being transported. At present, private passenger vehicles are not subject to any safety inspection and drivers need only have a class 5 driver's licence. No medical or skill/knowledge re-examinations are currently required. The absence of such standards and control is already a concern as it relates to the limited use of private passenger vehicles and taxis for transporting school children. Any further shift to this mode of transport would only make the problem worse.

As indicated in the section on seat belts, occupant protection is of major concern. This is especially true in the case of older buses with low-backed poorly padded seats and little or no protection for front seat passengers.

The safety of children while loading and unloading is closely related to the effectiveness of the signal systems used to communicate with approaching motorists. For example, some motorists are apparently unsure about what to do when they see the flashing red lights on school buses. This may be related to the fact that flashing red lights have a variety of meanings depending on their location and use. On a police car stopped at the side of the road, they mean nothing. At pedestrian crosswalks (Regina only) they mean stop and proceed with caution. At railway crossings they have meant stop and remain stopped. However, the new Vehicles Act makes it permissible to proceed if safe.

Even in the case of school buses flashing red lights mean only "be prepared to stop" so long as the bus is moving. It would therefore be highly desirable to present the motorist with clear and unambiguous instructions.

Many jurisdictions in Canada and the U.S. are adopting or experimenting with the use of amber "wigwags" as the advanced warning signal and the red "wigwag" stop lights are supplemented by a lighted stop sign (stop arm) mounted on the side of the bus.

Such an arrangement could go a long way to eliminating any doubt as to the message motorists would receive.

Finally, the installation of radio communication systems on buses was discussed at length. In general, school bus drivers reported an increased feeling of security when radios were installed. For technical reasons VHF systems while more expensive, tended to be preferred over CB radios because of the greater potential range and reliability. Their actual usefulness is very dependent on the nature and location of the route. Bus drivers travelling primarily in high population density rural areas or in urban areas would benefit very little from the availability of radio communication.

The Committee was pleased to note that the question of school bus maintenance was seldom identified as a problem. The school bus inspection program administered by the Highway Traffic Board received broad support from all concerned, although there was occasional suggestions that more frequent spot checks by safety officers would be appropriate.

Alternatives

The following alternatives were suggested by various groups and individuals during the hearings. It should be noted that many of these alternatives could be adopted either as a policy by local school board or as a regulation by the provincial government.

1) Status quo (ie, rely on current federal and provincial safety standards for design and maintenance).

Occupant Protection and Comfort

2) Phase out the use of van conversions by prohibiting their registration for the first time as school buses at some future date.

3) Require private passenger vehicles and taxis used for the transportation of school children to undergo inspection.

4) Retro-fit all buses (or van conversions only) with the newer high-backed seats and barriers.

5) Require the installation of padding on the walls and ceilings of buses.

6) Require the installation of larger shatter-proof side windows.

7) Install emergency escape hatches on the roof.

8) Provide increased ventillation and heating.

9) Provide additional protective framework on the front, left hand side to protect the driver.

10) Require windshields on new buses to be mounted by the manufacturer in such a manner as to prevent "popout" and thereby minimize the risk of occupant ejection. (This was the primary problem in the Strasbourg accident).

11) Require the installation of emergency specific first aid kits such as the "car behind" kit on all buses (on all new buses) rather than the conventional first aid kit.

Driver Vision

12) Use of thermo-pane windshields.

13) Improved type and location of mirrors which provide clear view across the front and along the sides of the buses but which minimize blind spots.

14) Require the installation of electric windshield wipers on new buses.

15) Install sun visors which are more effective.

16) Install a convex mirror on the inside back of the bus to provide the driver a clearer view of student activities otherwise obscurred by the high-backed seats.

17) Develop improved method for keeping the rear windows clear.

Signalization

18) Install the eight light (amber and red) signal system on all buses.

19) Require separate large amber turn signal lamps, front and back, which could also serve as advance warning signals when the bus is about to stop.

20) Install stop arms on all buses (or buses experiencing a recurring problem of vehicles passing or buses loading or unloading on provincial highways).

21) Conduct research into methods for keeping the rear of the bus clear of mud, dust or snow.

22) Require installation of reflective materials on the rear of all buses.

Radios/Communication

23) Recommend the installation of CB or VHF radios on all school buses.

24) Establish a provincial network of school bus radio communication using a common frequency and common transmittors/boosters similar to that in use by RCMP and the Department of Highways.

5.4 Operations

The actual day to day safe and efficient operation of the school bus transportation is the ultimate objective of all concerned. Many factors must work together and be taken into account in order for this objective to be met.

Operating procedures and standards can be handled in one or two ways. Policies can be developed and administered by School Divisions or regulations can be passed and enforced by a public agency. There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. Provincial regulations tend to represent universally applicable standards and provide uniformity. On the other hand local policies can be more sensitive to community needs and conditions. The following operational issues were presented or identified by the Committee.

Driver Qualifications

As mentioned previously, most drivers and school boards appear to be satisfied with current licensing standards for school bus drivers. The question of minimum and maximum age for bus drivers was raised on a number of occasions, but there was no agreement as to a particular age at which a driver becomes qualified or disqualified. Rather, it was generally felt that knowledge, skills, attitude and health are the main factors to be considered.

In particular, the frequency of medical re-examination was of concern especially in the case of older drivers where cardiac and other age-related problems may lead to "serious" driver failures.

To clarify the status of the "S" endorsement for school bus drivers, the Highway Traffic Board will be moving as quickly as possible to implement a two part licence system. The second part will be issued at time of qualifying or requalifying as a school bus driver and will be valid for three years from date of issue.

Stopping for Loading and Unloading

It became evident that where school buses stop on the roadway to load and unload students varies throughout the province. Some stop on the travelled portion of the roadway close to the centre, others move as far right as

possible. This is a critical operation that should be standardized throughout the province so that other motorists, who expect uniformity, will react accordingly. The Vehicles Act currently prohibits any vehicle from stopping anywhere but as far to the right as practical.

Railway Crossings

While all school buses are required to stop at unsignallized railway crossings, where to stop, what lights to display and whether to stop for signalized crossings needs further clarification and the establishment of uniform procedures. In the case of signalized crossings buses which stop run a greater risk of rear end collisions by motorists not expecting them to stop. In light of the very high degree of reliability reported for railway signal systems it may well be argued that stopping represents a greater risk than not stopping. On the other hand, bus drivers who become conditioned to cross without stopping may be more likely to forget the need to stop for uncontrolled crossings.

Routing and Overcrowding

Overcrowding of school buses and extraordinary long ride times were occasionally reported. This should best be addressed as a matter of local policy, however, confusion about bus seating capacity based on three persons per seat may be contributing to the overcrowding problem if school boards elect to transport as many children as their buses are rated to carry. Transporting unseated or only partially seated students could lead to disastrous consequences in the event of a collision. They would be denied the protection of padded seat backs or barriers and could be thrown the length of the bus, against the dash and even ejected through the windshield in the case of a severe headon crash.

Some pupil transportation is provided in urban centres by public transportation buses and by taxis. While the safety records of city transit operations are impeccable, the same does not hold true for taxis. Transporting several, unbelted, small children in the rear seat of a taxi may well represent a serious hazard in the pupil transportation system. This practice should be carefully reviewed and specific regulations or policies developed. Similarily, policies related to the selection and licensing of drivers of private passenger vehicles transporting school children need to be reviewed.

Weather and Road Conditions

The single most common contributor to accident causation, after driver error, is weather and road condition. Since school buses frequently experience extreme conditions it is imperative that go/no-go policies be clearly established in advance. Besides the actual conditions, two way radio communications, monitoring by parents and whether the driver is paid if he or she decides that it is unsafe to proceed are related factors that should be addressed.

These are matters which are best determined at the community level and in many cases have been. Unfortunately, clear policies do not appear to have been established in all school jurisdictions.

Student Transportation Policies

The content and extent of school division pupil transportation policies appears to vary considerably throughout the province. Some school boards were justifiably proud when presenting their detailed policies to the Committee and were anxious to share them with others. It would seem highly desirable that each school division have such clear and comprehensive policies approved by their boards for the safe transportation of students.

Local variations and conditions may preclude a standard set of policies, however, it would be expedient and tend to achieve uniformity if a model student transportation policy were developed centrally and made available to all school divisions to assist in their deliberations.

School Bus Fleet Supervisor

There was evidence that if a school division has a person appointed with specific responsibility for school bus operations then policies, procedures, standards, training and inspections tend to be well co-ordinated and documented. There appears to be specific advantages for most school divisions to have a qualified staff person managing their school bus operations.

Enforcement

As mentioned earlier in this report, the recurring problem of vehicles passing school buses which are loading and unloading appears to exist in spite of efforts on the part of police and drivers to bring these offenders to justice. The stated policy of the RCMP to do everything reasonably possible to enforce the law in this situation is to be commended.

Unfortunately, several school bus drivers expressed frustration and anger at the manner in which their testimony in contested court cases was handled by defense lawyers and in some cases by the judiciary. While this may reflect a lack of understanding as to how the legal process works, it may also indicate a need to more carefully prepare bus drivers for such experiences.

Alternatives

1) Require medical re-examination annually for all drivers after a certain age.

2) Retain and more strictly enforce the Vehicles Act requirements related to school buses stopping in the travelled portion.

3) Amend the Vehicles Act to permit school buses only to stop in the travelled portion of the highway.

4) Prohibit school buses from stopping at controlled railway crossing; or

5) Require all school buses to stop at all railway crossings following procedures similar to those of commercial bus companies; and

6) Require the installation of signs on the rear of school buses advising motorists of the fact that "This vehicle stops at all railway crossings".

7) Develop a model policy which would clearly define the road and weather conditions under which school buses would not be operated and the manner in which parents would be advised.

8) Develop a model policy which would define all aspects of pupil transportation under local control.

9) Require (or encourage) school boards to employ a pupil transportation supervisor to be responsible for developing and maintaining pupil transportation policy and for co-ordinating/supervising the pupil transportation system.

10) Establish by policy/regulation the maximum number of students transported on a school bus to ensure that all students have adequate seating provision.

11) Establish by policy/regulation the safety standards of vehicles, the qualifications of drivers and the manner in which students will be transported when taxis and private vehicles are employed.

12) Develop an instructional handout for school bus drivers which clearly outlines the procedures they should follow, the kind of information they should record and what questions they might be asked in preparation for court appearance to testify against drivers who pass the stopped school bus.

13) Require all driver licence applicants to correctly answer the question related to stopping for school buses displaying flashing red lights. Failure to correctly answer this question would mean an automatic failure of the written exam.

6. Summary of Recommendations Acted Upon

The following recommendations are being acted upon as quickly as possible.

1) The Department of Highways and Transportation and Rural Development, in cooperation with the SSTA are expanding the existing school bus signing program for highways and municipal roads.

2) A special school bus driver handbook will be prepared by the Department of Highways and Transportation in consultation with the SSTA. School bus drivers and contractors.

3) A pamphlet will be prepared outlining the procedures which school bus drivers should follow when a motorist passes the bus while loading or unloading. The pamphlet will include a check list of the information needed by the driver should he or she be called to testify in court.

4) The creation of a separate "S" endorsement card for the school bus driver licences. This will provide more accurate information to school boards as to the licence validation dates. The "S" endorsement will then be valid for a three year period and will not be dependent upon the driver's birth month for renewal.

7. Summary of Recommendations Being Seriously Considered

The following recommendations are being given serious consideration by the Committee. However, this should not be taken as an indication that other recommendations will not be considered.

1) Establishment of a minimum $250 fine for motorists convicted of passing a stopped school bus displaying flashing red lights.

2) Request the Highway Traffic Board to implement a policy whereby every licence applicant who takes a written test must correctly answer questions related to stopping for school buses or they will fail the test.

3) Require the installation of lighted "stop" arms on all buses to be activated when the bus is loading or unloading.

APPENDIX

WRITTEN BRIEFS SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE

School Bus Course
Saskatchewan Safety Council
August 2, 1983

RCMP
August 24, 1983

Gordon Martens
Swift Current Rural School Division #75
August 24, 1983

Use of CB Radios
Buffalo Plains School Division #21

Mrs. E. Wood
Thunder Creek School Division
August 25, 1983

John Fussel
Buffalo Plains School Division #21
August 25, 1983

Saskatchewan Action Committee
Status of Women
September 2, 1983

George Arnold
Bus Supervisor
Yorkdale School Divison #36
Yorkton
September 20, 1983

Dr. J. Stewart McMillan, M.B., Ch.B
Chief Coroner
and
Mr. A.R. Terry
Administrator, Coroners Act
September 20, 1983

Lucille Thompson
Oxbow School Division #51
September 20, 1983

Peter Clinkard
Market Team Representative
Motorola

Board of Education
Prince Albert Rural School Division #56
October 13, 1983

Joan Kirkham
Red Cross
All Aboard for School Bus Safety
October 14, 1983

Terry Elliott
Meadow Lake School Division #66
October 14, 1983

C.C. Bysouth
Battle River School Division #60
October 14, 1983

Ruth Robinson
Child Safety Committee
October 18, 1983

Dean Hall
Saskatchewan Driver Educator's Association
October 18, 1983

Lucille Thompson
Oxbow School Division #51
October 18, 1983

Joy Bastness
Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations
November 5, 1983